

[Superstitions]

FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

No. Words

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER J. D. Stradling

ADDRESS 653 South State Street

DATE May 2, 1939

SUBJECT Superstitions

NAME OF INFORMANT Walter Dill

Certainly I believe in devils. Generally people ask 'Well, whoever saw a devil, anyway?' And that's why I believe in them. People do see them, you know.

I was lying on the sand at Jackson Park Beach one hot afternoon in summer among a lot of other people. Right nearby was an old lady with her lunch on her lap, looking down and peeling an orange. It was a year when the Park rented bright red bathing suits.

Library of Congress

I was watching a man swimming in toward shore. When he felt bottom under him he ceased swimming and stood up in shallow water that was not much more than to his knees. He had on one of those red bathing suits.

There was considerable commotion next to me and I looked over to see the old lady scatter her lunch all over the sand as she leaped to her feet. She beat it up the beach as fast as she could go and never came back. I didn't know what was the matter with her and hardly gave it a thought. Thought she might have forgotten a cake in the oven or something.

2

It was about two weeks later when I was with another young fellow on the walk along the beach. As squirts of that age will, we decided to pick up a couple of girls. So we did. We took them up to the promenade on the beach house and sat down overlooking the lake. I don't remember how the subject of devils came up but one of the girls said, 'Yes, I believe in devils. My mother saw one right here on this beach. A red devil came up out of the water and chased her.'

I still didn't think much of it until we took the girls home that night. They lived in a small house way over on the West side. The family was all out on the front porch trying to keep cool. Something clicked in my head about the lake, red bathing suits and devils when I was introduced to the old lady. Lo and behold it was the same one who had left her lunch on the beach in that fashion. And she still swears to this day that a red devil came up out of the water and chased her clear out of the park.